

THE NATIONAL LITERACY POLICY (PNA) IN 2019: SOME REFLECTIONS

A POLÍTICA NACIONAL DE ALFABETIZAÇÃO (PNA) DE 2019: ALGUMAS REFLEXÕES

LA POLÍTICA NACIONAL DE ALFABETIZACIÓN (PNA) DE 2019: ALGUNAS REFLEXIONES

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ABSTRACT: Analyzing the National Literacy Policy, established by law 9.765 in April 11, 2019 is the central objective of this article. Result of the paths already trodden in the research project entitled "The construction of the process of reading and writing in literacy: the children's vision of the early years of Elementary School" and the readings held during the School Culture Discipline, Knowledge and Educational Practices of the Graduate Program stricto sensu in Teaching, Language and Society (PPGELS). We perceive in the course of the analysis the colonial perspective of this governmental action, addressed from the perspective of coloniality; and the training of the literacy teacher, focused on training, choice of a teaching method, so dismiss teaching autonomy; an authoritarian, conflicting and disputed curriculum; and the importance of understanding education as a political act, which makes it possible to resist and resurface these anti-democratic official proposals.

KEYWORDS: Literacy. National Literacy Policy. Public policy.

RESUMO: *Analisar a Política Nacional de Alfabetização, criada pelo Decreto nº 9.765 de 11 de abril de 2019⁴, é o objetivo central deste artigo. Resultado do projeto de pesquisa intitulado "A construção do processo de leitura e escrita na alfabetização: o olhar das crianças dos anos iniciais do Ensino Fundamental" e das leituras realizadas durante a Disciplina Cultura Escolar, Saberes e Práticas Educativas do Programa de Pós-Graduação stricto sensu em Ensino, Linguagem e Sociedade (PPGELS). Percebemos no decorrer da análise a perspectiva colonial dessa ação governamental, abordada sob a ótica da colonialidade; e a formação do professor alfabetizador, voltada para treinamentos, escolha de um método de ensino, de modo*

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⁴ Available at: <http://portal.mec.gov.br/> http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2019-2022/2019/decreto/D9765.htm. Accessed on: 10 Feb. 2022.

a destituir a autonomia docente; um currículo autoritário, conflitivo e disputado; e a importância de compreender a educação enquanto ato político, o que possibilita resistir e ressurgir a estas propostas oficiais antidemocráticas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Alfabetização. Política Nacional de Alfabetização. Política pública.

RESUMEN: *El análisis de la Política Nacional de Alfabetización, instituida por el Decreto n.º 9.765 del 11 de abril de 2019 es el objetivo central de este artículo. Resultado de los caminos ya recorridos en el proyecto de investigación titulado “La construcción del proceso de lectura y escritura en la alfabetización: la mirada de los niños en los primeros años de la escuela primaria” y las lecturas realizadas durante la Disciplina Escolar Cultura, Conocimiento y Prácticas Educativas del Programa de Educación Stricto sensu de Posgrado en Docencia, Lengua y Sociedad (PPGELS). Durante el análisis percibimos la perspectiva colonial de esta acción gubernamental, abordada desde la perspectiva de la colonialidad; y la formación del alfabetizador, centrada en la formación, eligiendo un método de enseñanza, para privar de autonomía docente; un plan de estudios autoritario, conflitivo y controvertido; y la importancia de entender la educación como un acto político, que permita resistir y resurgir estas propuestas oficiales antidemocráticas.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: Alfabetización. Política Nacional de Alfabetización. Política pública.

To begin with

This article is the result of the paths already taken in the research project entitled "The construction of the reading and writing process in literacy: the view of children in the early years of elementary school", and of the readings carried out during the discipline School Culture, Knowledge and Educational Practices⁵ of the Postgraduate Program stricto sensu in Teaching, Language and Society (PPGELS), with the intention of investigating the reports of children in age-grade distortion already literate, understanding the processes that built their learning of reading and writing, making them protagonists of their stories and what meanings are attributed to reading and writing practices, the meaning given to the school.

We first analyze the National Literacy Policy, created within the current Brazilian government, instituted by Decree No. 9,765, April 11, 2019 · Constituted by: deliberations, didactic materials, on-line books, programs and courses, here analyzed the Continuing Education Course Literacy Practices, linked to the *Tempo de Aprender* Program⁶, both available in digital platforms. The actions intended for this policy are planned for both face-to-face and virtual environments, but, since its concretion, it has been happening only in the virtual sphere.

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⁶ (Tempo de Aprender Program). Available at: <http://alfabetizacao.mec.gov.br/tempo-de-aprender>.

The National Literacy Policy (PNA) is a State policy aimed at Basic Education, instituting programs and actions for literacy, involving students, teachers, managers and families. The first beneficiaries are children in early childhood and students in Elementary School in the initial years. The objectives appear in the decree, such as raising the quality of teaching and learning and contributing to achieve goal 5 of the National Education Plan (PNE), to make all children literate by the end of the 3rd year of elementary school at the latest; goal 9 of the PNE is to raise the literacy rate of the population aged 15 years or older to 93.5% by 2015 and, by the end of the term of this PNE, to eradicate absolute illiteracy and reduce by 50% the functional illiteracy rate (BRAZIL, 2019).

This article is about the impressions of the National Literacy Policy. In the first topic: "The North-centered education of the PNA", it discusses the colonial perspective of this governmental action. The second topic: "Interweaving of formation, curriculum and politicality", analyzes the perspective of formation of the literacy teacher of this policy; the conception of curriculum presupposed between the lines of the PNA; education/literacy as a political act, until we conclude these first reflections in our final considerations.

The North-centric Education Project of the National Literacy Policy

Even with the end of the colonial period ⁷, the dependence of South American countries on the Northern (Western) countries is still very present. The subordination of South America takes place in economic, political, and epistemological relations. The Eurocentric knowledge discourse is produced as the universal and scientific one, said by Europeans for Africans, Europeans for Asians, and Europeans for Americans. As a result, a single history has been written for all peoples, depriving knowledge and lives by subordinating them to European standards of living.

These relations of dependence penetrate into the educational scenario and also into Public Educational Policy ⁸ analyzed here, from a colonial perspective. Colonialism has not

⁷Period of territorial exploration of Brazil, starting around 1549 until 1822, with its political independence. Economic and political decisions were made by the Portuguese metropolis.

⁸To explain the concept of Public Educational Policy, two other terms are important: Politics and Public Policy. About Bobbio's concept of **Politics**, Costa (2019, p. 102) mentions: "Politics is an indispensable concept to understand human praxis linked to Power. Human beings are political beings by nature because they possess the ability to relate to others within the society in which they live. This nature lies in the idea of developing and understanding power relations which, in turn, are, according to the author, political relations. The human being needs politics because he is not autarchic and, consequently, depends on the other for his own existence". They are characterized as **Public Policies**: "[...] the guidelines, guiding principles of action of public power; rules and procedures for relations between public power and society, mediations between actors of society and the State" (TEIXEIRA, 2002, p. 02, apud COSTA, 2019 p. 108). And **Public Educational Policies** are understood as those

ended, but has been modified, even if there is the "end" of territorial occupation, this does not mean the end of colonialism, it changes to the perspective of coloniality according to Quijano (2010), this being a different concept from colonialism, as it is more modern and strongly perpetuated, but is still linked to colonialism (CUNHA, 2018). "Aníbal Quijano creates the term 'coloniality' to denounce that the domination present in colonial systems endures even with the end of colonies. For him, the patterns of power, knowledge, and being are imposed by the European, capitalist, 'north-centered' logic (LEITE; RAMALHO; CARVALHO, 2019, p. 1).

Our country still continues to import public policy models, evaluation systems, research, theories and knowledge from other countries, often disregarding the historical, social, economic and political constraints of Brazil, which are often discrepant from other international realities. It is up to Brazil to resist this logic and seek to build its policies from the knowledge produced by the research community in the sense of not only strengthening the science that is produced here, but also to take the reins of the decolonization process, a condition for a sustainable and autonomous development (NUNES, 2019).

We support the criticism of the colonial perspective of the PNA by the following analyses: expressive amount of foreign experts in the elaboration of this Brazilian government action (data are in the technical and content review in the electronic notebook). And, as for the Brazilians who participated in its elaboration, they are restricted to only a few specialists who discuss literacy from a linguistic perspective, with emphasis on the Cognitive Sciences of Reading. Throughout the document, it is emphatically stated that the policy is based on scientific evidence, using international standards as models. Names such as England, Portugal, Australia, Israel, Finland, France, the United States, and Great Britain are cited throughout the text.

To reaffirm the scientificity defended in the PNA, its elaborators mention the scientific evidence that "guides" the literacy of this governmental action. They report in the virtual notebook a brief history of reports on literacy, emphasizing international documents. They cite the first scientific report from the United States, produced by Jeanne Chall, who published the book *Learning to Read* in 1967; the second cited: *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*, from 1998; the third is from 2000, when the National Reading Panel report was released in the United States; the fourth mentioned, *Developing Early Literacy*, from the National Early Literacy Panel (NELP), published in 2009 (BRAZIL, 2019). At the end of the

that regulate and guide the education systems. Brazil currently develops several educational public policies focused on Basic Education and everything that surrounds the world of the school.(COSTA, 2019, p. 109)

PNA virtual notebook, it can be observed that the references used to theoretically support the policy are mostly foreign, 48 international references and 37 Brazilian references.

The epistemologies validated by the National Literacy Policy often do not match the different realities of Brazilian schools. They do not dialogue with the specificities of peripheral public schools, quilombola schools, indigenous schools, and rural schools. When proposing knowledge from the international to the national sphere, even within the Brazil sphere, one tends to think of our various 'Brasis'.

In a different logic, Santos (2009) proposes a post-abysal thinking, that is, learning from the South (the set of countries and regions of the world that were subjected by European colonialism), using the epistemologies of the South, confronting the monoculture of modern sciences, in sustainable and dynamic interactions and without compromising its autonomy. Proposing an ecology of knowledges, which is the recognition of a plurality of forms of knowledge, beyond universal scientific knowledge, while seeking credibility for these knowledges, renouncing any general epistemology.

Recognizing, in such a way, the diversity of knowledge, not only the knowledge imported from the discourses of the colonizers, or from the hegemonic curricula, but also the experience and knowledge built in the daily life of Brazilian schools that the external evaluations are unable to capture, often not present in public educational policies.

Public policies, by importing European and North American knowledge models, also copy the ways of doing research, using the same research methodologies. Their methods are considered as unique, valid and effective. And, in this way, it does research along the same North-centric paths, passing through different ways, roads and routes, but expecting the same results.

In this way, educational public policies tend to value and be built within more precise data, answers that seem more complete and ready, treading through methods that bring these aspects. However, many times the subjectivities, the social contexts of Brazilian schools and the reality of their students cannot be fully revealed.

This scientificity proposed by the PNA proposes a single model of how to do science, still based on the molds of other countries, in order to inferiorize the science done in Brazil, which has so much knowledge already built here by Brazilians. We can notice this analysis by the erasing of Brazilian research, which does not discuss literacy in the same bias proposed by this policy. Researchers and specialists in the sciences and subjectivities that contributed to thinking about literacy in our country are not cited in its documents.

The intention is not to devalue non-Brazilian studies. Differently from what this governmental action proposes, we defend dialogues with international research, but starting from the experiences of Brazilian schools and universities. For, as has already been done, the construction of our science based on our realities, and the theories built from them. One mistake of this colonial policy, on purpose, is the erasing of Brazilian references, which contributed scientific evidence to the field of literacy in the country. In this essay, names like: Paulo Freire, present! Magda Soares, present! It is worth mentioning here.

By revealing the presence and contributions of these intellectuals cited, we seek to contemplate many other researchers / scholars who agree with the thoughts of these educators, or defend literacy as a right of all children, as a process beyond decoding and codification, learning to read and write as social practice, as a political act advocated by Freire (1996).

It becomes contradictory the text of the PNA, because it tediously says it is based on scientific evidence, but it is thought only within a closed group of experts who discuss literacy within a single perspective, the linguistic facet. What makes it contradictory to think of this scientificity, because science is also made in the multiplicities of thoughts, in the contradictions, restlessness, inaccuracies, and by the faults. Science happens beyond the tabulation of data and theoretical concepts, but especially in the dialogue and exchanges between researchers and educators.

Interweaving of training, curriculum, and politicality

It was possible to perceive the perspectives of the National Literacy Policy for the literacy teacher's training process through the analyses carried out on the PNA material, from the Continuous Training Course Literacy Practices, aimed at literacy teachers of the 1st and 2nd initial years of Elementary School, linked to the Tempo de Aprender Program, offered by the Ministry of Education through its Avamec platform⁹.

O ambiente virtual é onde acontece o curso on-line de formação continuada Práticas de Alfabetização, constituído por videoaulas subdividas em módulos: módulo 1 introdução, módulo 2 aprendendo a ouvir, módulo 3 conhecimentos alfabéticos, módulo 4 fluência, módulo 5 vocabulário, módulo 6 compreensões, módulo 7 produção de escrita, e o questionário de finalização (BRASIL, 2019).

⁹ Avamec is a virtual learning environment platform of the Ministry of Education that offers free distance education courses in partnership with public universities and providing certification. These courses are available to education professionals registered on the platform, through the following site: <https://avamec.mec.gov.br>. Accessed on: 10 Feb. 2022.

It can be seen that continuing education is focused on the training of contents presupposed by the PNA. We define it here as a merely technical and solitary course, since the training does not allow relationships and exchanges between educators, whether of knowledge, experiences and practices. What we have is a merely theoretical program, aimed at teaching concepts.

Differently from this training, Gadotti (2011) proposes that, more than a technical training, the new training should be centered on political training for the educator to exercise his profession with competence. It is necessary to value a collaborative and cooperative training, founded on the exchange between educational professionals, based on dialogue.

By bumping up against a conception for training, in the logic of the Literacy Practices course, which focuses on teaching literacy teachers "new scientific methods", the course failed to build a bridge between educators' experiences and practices with literacy theories. Freire (1996) warns us that training is much more than training.

And this makes it possible for us to question ourselves: Can we consider this action of the Tempo de Aprender Program a formative process? To answer such a question, we bring the contributions of Alves (2017), who considers that teacher training takes place through educational networks that are articulated, acting in various spaces and times, such as inside and outside the school. About the 'practice-theories' is quoted in the author's work:

These networks are characterized as "theory-practices" because in them we develop educational processes and think about them, continuously. So far, I have been able to work with the following networks: that of the 'praetheories' of academic education; that of everyday pedagogical 'praetheories'; that of the 'praetheories' of government policies; that of the collective 'praetheories' of social movements; that of the 'praetheories' of research in education; the 'praetheories' of artistic manifestations; the 'praetheories' of production and 'uses' of media; and the 'praetheories' of experiences in cities, in the countryside or by the roadside (OLIVEIRA, 2012 apud ALVES, 2017, p. 2).

The author defends training beyond the school, both in the realm of practices and theories. In view of this conception of formation, public educational policies can be formative, as long as they are not isolated; on the contrary, they should act in several spheres and involve several subjects and spaces for their effectiveness.

I also add Freire's conceptions that the formation as a permanent process must have "[...] the fundamental moment is that of critical reflection on the practice. It is by critically thinking about today's or yesterday's practice that one can improve the next practice. (FREIRE, 1996, p. 39).

In this way, as a continuous formative process, the teacher needs to reflect and evaluate his practices, his conceptions of education, his work methodologies, the teacher-student relationship, so that he can be building, rebuilding and deconstructing, that is, forming himself.

It is important that this movement of reflection and action, that is, critical reflection on the practice, and as a result the praxis, be part of the continuing education and curricular programs of the educational public policies that aim to train literacy teachers.

Other analyses lead us to understand that from the presupposed vision of continuing education in the course Literacy Practices there is an emptying of the teacher's autonomy. Educators are prescribed how to teach literacy, the methods and didactic activities to be used, depriving teachers of decisions that are part of their job.

Freire (1996) talks about autonomy as one of the principles of educational practice, centered on experiences that stimulate decision making and responsibility, in other words, experiences that respect freedom. These are world positions we take throughout our existence.

Autonomy in teaching, teachers in their professional trajectories have the freedom to make decisions consistent with their educational practices in the classroom. And the emptiness occurs in the face of standardization and impositions by the system, that is, decisions made by "others" about their daily lives, and these are not allowed to participate.

In these prescriptions to the teacher, both in the program observed and in other PNA documents, the prioritization of a teaching method appears explicit: the phonic method for literacy, and also expresses the legitimacy of the Cognitive Sciences of Reading, going along with the reflections provided by the metaphor "Blind Men and the Elephant". The narrative tells that six blind men, to find out what an animal in front of them was about, felt a "part" of its body; to support their positions, each man has a discourse of truth about the elephant, from his touch.

Each subject constructed a conception of the whole (elephant) from a single part (body member). We analogize blind people to the National Literacy Policy, which emphasized only one of the "parts" of the literacy process. The same metaphor, "Blind people and elephants," is analyzed by Soares (2016, p. 33): "[...] who comes to the following conclusion: each blind man examined only a part of the elephant, and mistakenly generalized, taking the part for the whole, so also the proposals and methods for initial learning of the written language are restricted, in general to a part of the process, mistakenly considering that the part is the whole."

Thus, the method has always been a question that privileges one facet, a certain function, a certain theoretical assumption, ignoring the others. Literacy is a complete phenomenon, involving the complex interaction between the social practices of the written language, and the

one who reads or writes presupposes the simultaneous exercise of many different competencies. This is what has been called literacy teaching (SOARES, 2016).

In view of what has already been analyzed, we can also make some observations about the model of curriculum presupposed in the National Literacy Policy, since this normatization can exert influences on the teacher's work in the classroom.

Between the lines of the PNA we can see the constitution of a conflicting and authoritarian curriculum: the teacher's authorship is reduced by the prescriptions of how to teach of the continuing education policy for the literacy teacher, already analyzed in previous paragraphs.

It is extremely relevant to discuss and reflect on curriculum, since according to Arroyo (2013) it is the core, the most structuring central space of the school's function. Therefore, it is the most fenced territory, the most normatized. But also the most politicized, innovated, and re-signified.

The curriculum becomes a field of interest because it is a political field. In its territory are revealed disputes for society projects (ARROYO, 2013). It can be noticed that the teacher's ways of teaching, the contents and the evaluation become a concern of educational public policies. These issues tend to reveal the educational proposals of a group, their conceptions of teaching and learning.

As a field of interests, the curriculum happens by different ways of thinking about society, different ways of thinking about education/literacy, becoming a territory of disputes. Cites Arroyo (2013): disputes of knowledge, what to teach; disputes of social relations in which denied groups fight for spaces and recognition; teachers' disputes against the normatizations that try to control their work; political disputes and of society and State and its institutions, as well as its policies and guidelines.

In the field of curriculum, when they prioritize only one conception of society and education, they deny the history and participation of subjects, they deny so-called "common sense" knowledge - what we call life knowledge - they deny knowledge. In didactics, when they refuse the different ways of teaching, the different methodologies, an authoritarian curriculum is produced. This authoritarianism was noticeable in the PNA, which was based on a unique model of knowledge about literacy and method, with the intention of ending a hegemonic thought based on uniqueness.

In this model of curriculum presupposed between the lines of the National Literacy Policy, the hegemony of a group prevails, whose social plan has the profile similar to the project reported by Silva (2001), centered on the primacy of the market, on purely economic values,

on the interests of large industrial and financial groups. The privileged meanings of this discourse are: competitiveness, flexibilization, adjustment, globalization, privatization, deregulation, consumer, market. In this project, education is seen as simply instrumental.

Besides being a field of interests, not only educational but also economic, the curriculum permeates social power relations. This means to assert particular meanings, proper to one social group, over the meanings of other groups, which presupposes a gradient, a differential of power between them. It implies seeing the field of meaning and meaning production as contested, disputed and conflictive. The struggle for meaning is a struggle for hegemony and for dominance (SILVA, 2001).

All these contests are visible in public educational policies, as it is a potent field of formation. It would even be more appropriate the expression government policy than public educational policy. Education in Brazil has always been a field of disputed political ideas; in each government we see a hegemonic current of thought acting explicitly in the field of education and teaching.

In the educational context the hegemonic ideologies of oneness are implanted, at the same time it is a field of resisting and resurgence, from where the movements of political awareness of the subject can take place. According to Freire (1996, p. 38): "[...] education is a form of intervention in the world. Intervention that, beyond the knowledge of the contents that are well or badly taught and/or learned, implies both the space of reproduction of the dominant ideology and its unmasking".

Here, we insist and reaffirm the importance of understanding education as a political act. Not of a partisan nature, but understanding that the educational practice is not neutral, that all subjects make their choices and take positions, driven by their histories, experiences, knowledge, and convictions.

As a specifically human action, which addresses dreams, utopias, and goals, what is called politicality of education is its impossibility of neutrality, and the educability of the human being, which is based on his unfinished and the awareness of his historical unfinished: necessarily the human being would become an ethical being, a being of choice and decision (FREIRE, 1989).

As unfinished historical, social, and political subjects, capable of making decisions, taking on speeches, claiming and fighting for what they believe in, and consequently building a better education for all. Differently, when this movement of political search is not assumed, but rather passivity, the risks are greater that "others" make the decisions for us, privileging

only a minority. In this way, comfort and disinterest can mean the hiding of our lives and the denial of our projects for society.

Education must always be a priority, it is linked to all spheres of the social environment, so it must always be the center of our interests. So it is clear:

[...] In the case of both the educational process and the political act, one of the fundamental questions is clarity about for whom and for what, therefore against whom and against what, we do education, and for whom and for what, therefore against whom and against what, we carry out political activity. (FREIRE, 1989, p. 15).

As the author quotes, clarity is needed in whose favor education is being built: is it for all? Or for a minority? To be clear about who we are positioning ourselves against, if they are groups, subjects, and/or institutions. These questions should be central when thinking about the educational act, so that the positions and practices taken are coherent and linked to the project of education and society that we want.

In this way, the politicity of education allows it to be reproduced/ re-signified, exclusionary/inclusive, and authoritarian/democratic. Thus, the educational public policies are built by human beings moved by their interests, which many times are not common to the interests of the majority, some think the formation of the subject and society for the market, for profit, and when this happens there is the possibility of transgression, to violate these structures, only possible when one takes critical positions and sets them in motion, because this reality is not finished, because the educational act is political and there is always the possibility of changes.

We end this cycle with the words of Guimarães (2017): it is always possible to create something beyond the simple resistance to official proposals. To leave the imposed agenda and propose diverse and creative movements that can produce debates and advances in this and other issues. "Resisting is necessary; living demands much more: it demands creation!" (GUIMARAES, 2017, p. 16).

Final remarks

We have not finished here our impressions of the National Literacy Policy, but in this cycle we are allowed to make some considerations. This governmental action goes against a democratic literacy/education project by assuming authoritarian and colonial postures. By adopting "scientific evidence" for literacy, based on copies from European countries and the

United States model, without dialogue with the community of Brazilian researchers who discuss literacy from various perspectives: they are deliberately mistaken.

Not only that, they prescribe to teachers the ways of teaching, proposing a single teaching method, as if this were the problem of literacy in Brazil, to cover up the wounds in education that they do not mention: inadequate schools, few investments, poorly paid teachers, continuing education programs focused on training, segregated schools, schools in the periphery, countryside schools, quilombola and indigenous schools forgotten and denied, overcrowded classrooms, schools that are not inclusive from the physical structure to the pedagogical conditions. While the problem of literacy is not seen beyond the pedagogical, in its social character, it is not possible to heal injuries that were never treated.

Meanwhile, Brazilian children are denied the right to learn how to read and write, most of them from the lower social classes. Facing this reality of literacy in our country, and with the institution of this anti-democratic government action, it was necessary, as political individuals, for us to take a stand against this kind of education: teacher training-oriented, colonial perspective and authoritarian curriculum, in favor of a literacy that includes all Brazilian children, that doesn't need young people and adults claiming these rights. That they learn the Alphabetic Writing System, but beyond this understand the function of reading and writing in order to participate critically in the society in which they are inserted.

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